United Nations S/2016/167

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2016
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 21 February 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the letter of the Secretary-General reporting on implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) (S/2016/152), which comes across as a copy of his reports on implementation of the Security Council resolutions on humanitarian affairs. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic had expected that the Secretariat would learn from its previous mistakes and its open bias in favour of the armed groups, their representatives and the forces and States behind them. However, the letter confirms to the Security Council that the Secretariat's work is marred by inaccuracy and flagrant bias against Syria. The Secretariat avoids mentioning what is clearly the reason for the end of the Geneva round of negotiations, namely that the Riyadh opposition informed the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria that it would announce its withdrawal from the current round. This led the Special Envoy to suspend the talks in order to cover up the fact that the opposition had caused the failure of the Geneva round of negotiations which he had convened on 29 January 2016.

At the invitation of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic travelled to Geneva to attend the negotiations that had been convened in the context of dialogue among Syrians aimed at reaching a political solution to the crisis in Syria. The Saudi Arabian opposition, known as the High Negotiations Commission, posed an obstacle to the negotiations when Saudi Arabia denied it permission to attend. Saudi Arabia reversed its stance under pressure from several quarters. It then allowed the High Negotiations Commission to travel to Geneva, but without naming the members of the delegation or defining its political vision. The purpose of the High Negotiations Commission's arrival in Geneva was to hinder and sabotage the negotiating sessions and strike a blow against any endeavour that could lead to dialogue among Syrians.

The preparatory round was also flawed in several ways. For instance, the Special Envoy was unable to fulfil his responsibility towards the participants. In particular, he was unable to bring together an opposition delegation including all components of the Syrian opposition in the country and abroad. Others were unable to provide a list of terrorist groups and organizations. Rather than proving impartial,

Please recycle

independent and transparent, the Special Envoy suspended negotiations until a later date in order to cover up the obduracy of the Riyadh delegation and its backers, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The letter of the Secretary-General fails to mention those facts, which are now well known to all.

The Secretary-General refers to a ceasefire. For our part, we wish to state that a ceasefire can be discussed but not imposed on the parties. In accordance with the Vienna statements and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), such discussions should take place among Syrians. Before that can happen, the terrorist groups should be designated and excluded from the ceasefire, as they pose a threat to safety and security, not only in Syria but across the region and the world. A ceasefire can be called once the concerned parties have agreed on arrangements, measures and steps by engaging in dialogue to settle on the details. The mechanism to enact the ceasefire and monitor its implementation should be devised through coordination and cooperation among the Syrian Government and local and field leaders. That approach would preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, two elements that are emphasized in all of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The section of the letter concerning confidence-building measures also shows that the authors are neither objective nor realistic. Such measures would normally emerge from consultations and discussions among the concerned parties. They cannot under any circumstances be applied selectively or before the start of negotiations among concerned parties. The Special Envoy should work to ensure that those parties that are supporting and funding the armed terrorist groups refrain from that course of action and stop intervening on behalf of the groups, which pose a threat to safety and security in Syria, the region and the world. Every possible measure should be taken to put pressure on States sponsors of terrorism, particularly Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, to refrain from harbouring the terrorists; stop providing them with weapons, supplies and ammunition; close the terrorist training camps on their territory; and prevent the terrorists from crossing their borders into the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretary-General, his Special Envoy and the Security Council must press the Turkish regime to prevent its army from violating Syrian sovereignty and attacking Syrian territory in support of its armed terrorist proxies. Such action would preserve safety and security in the region and prevent it from descending into all-out war.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is surprised and, yet again, dismayed that the Secretary-General has taken such a biased approach, giving the impression that the United Nations has abandoned its neutrality and become a party to the crisis in Syria. Time and again, Syria has stressed that it is committed to providing all forms of humanitarian assistance to Syrians affected by the crisis, wherever they may be on Syrian territory. It has proved open to cooperation and coordination with all States, United Nations entities and other international organizations active in Syria in order to deliver humanitarian assistance to Syrians affected by the crisis. The facts on the ground show that the Government has made every effort to deliver humanitarian assistance to all of its citizens wherever they may be. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Walid Al-Moualem, stressed during his most recent meeting with the Special Envoy that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic approved the deployment of joint assistance convoys to Dayr al-Zawr, Madaya, Mu'addamiyah, Kafr Batna, Zabadani, Kafraya and Fu'ah, and to everyone who needs it wherever

they may be in Syria. Those humanitarian assistance convoys follow others that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations entities have deployed to those areas in the past. The Government has informed the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Damascus that it wishes to deploy regular joint humanitarian and relief convoys, with immediate effect, to the towns of Kafraya and Fu'ah in Idlib governorate and the towns of Madaya and Mu'addamiyah in Rif Dimashq governorate.

Deplorably, the letter of the Secretary-General does not mention that the terrorist groups have attacked humanitarian assistance convoys and Syrian Arab Red Crescent emergency staff. One such incident took place at the entrance to the town of Madaya a few days ago. The letter also deliberately ignores the fact that the armed terrorist groups recently prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching Fu'ah, Kafraya and Madaya for over one month. It neglects to mention that the towns of Nubul and Zahra' were completely besieged for several years until their recent liberation by the Syrian Arab Army. Contrary to what is stated in the letter of the Secretary-General, the crisis was caused by the actions of the armed terrorist groups and by the unilateral coercive economic and financial measures imposed by the United States of America and the European Union. The Syrian Government is fulfilling its constitutional duty towards its citizens by delivering all forms of assistance, whether food, non-food, health or medical, to its citizens who have been affected by the crisis. It seeks to alleviate the impact of the terrorist crimes and the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States of America, France and Britain, all of which lead the hypocrisy and misinformation brigade on the Security Council.

The letter of the Secretary-General makes no reference to the raids carried out by the so-called international coalition led by the United States of America. The raids have destroyed numerous oil and gas facilities, not to mention other components of the economic infrastructure. By way of example, coalition aircraft have bombarded the two electrical power plants in Ridwaniyah, in Aleppo governorate, and the water treatment plant in Raqqah governorate. Those actions have exacerbated the suffering of the Syrian people. Such air attacks and indiscriminate bombings have claimed the lives of numerous civilians and inflicted various injuries on thousands of others. The Secretary-General fails to mention those facts, which have been the subject of numerous letters that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has sent to him and to the President of the Security Council.

The Syrian Government protests in the strongest terms at the omission in the letter of any reference to the terrorist suicide bombings in several Syrian cities. For instance, a series of suicide bombings has taken place in the Zahra' neighbourhood of Homs city. Armed terrorist groups, particularly Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front and other groups associated with them and the Al-Qaida terrorist organization, have indiscriminately bombed defenceless civilians in their homes, work places and markets, children at school and students at university.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has proved deeply committed to its responsibilities. It has been intent on pushing through numerous national reconciliation processes. It has encouraged fighters to hand over their weapons and ammunition to the Syrian authorities in return for an amnesty. It is determined to

restore safety and peace in the villages, towns and regions where armed groups have taken refuge and used the civilian population as human shields. The Government's policies seek to promote the voluntary return of civilians who were forced out of their towns and regions by armed terrorist groups, which subjected them to abduction, killings, slaughter, looting and pillaging. The Government calls on the Secretary-General to bring pressure to bear on those States that have imposed unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian people to rescind those measures immediately. By so doing, those States would save the lives of Syrian citizens and comply with their stated commitment to humanitarian values. The Government calls on the Secretary-General to ensure that his forthcoming reports give an accurate and objective account of what is happening in Syria and the implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). Otherwise, those reports will mislead global public opinion and the members of the Security Council. That outcome would only prolong the crisis in Syria and the proliferation of terrorism across the region and the world.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative